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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 002337

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SUBJECT: CODEL GREEN DISCUSSES MADRASSAS, EXTREMISM WITH PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF

Classified By: Amb. Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Summary: In a July 4 meeting with President Musharraf, CODEL Green discussed extremism in Pakistan and their support for madrassa reform. The CODEL cited a specific case of two young U.S. citizens apparently being held against their will in a Karachi madrassa; the Embassy is facilitating their return to the U.S. Musharraf cited three areas where Pakistan seeks increased cooperation from the United States: social and economic development (including passage of the reconstruction opportunity zone legislation); increased assistance for the Frontier Corps to add four additional wings; and additional trade and investment to provide more jobs. In response to their question, Musharraf assured the delegation that Pakistan's nuclear weapons are safe from extremists. End summary.

¶2. (C) A Congressional delegation composed of Representatives Gene Green (D-TX), Mike McCaul (R-TX), and Henry Cuellar (D-TX) met with President Pervez Musharraf July 4, accompanied by the Ambassador. The meeting focused on extremism in Pakistan and the need for madrassa reform. After Representative Green's acknowledgment of Pakistan's sacrifices in the war against terrorism and his desire to partner with Pakistan on a wide range of issues, the President commented that the relationship with the United States should be "broad-based." He would like to bring the relationship back to the days prior to nuclear sanctions in 1998, adding that the "army owes everything to the U.S.," even the barracks design. Representative McCaul told the President that he wants to "work together to eradicate terrorism."

Importance of madrassa reform

¶3. (C) After raising a consular case from a constituent regarding two young U.S. citizens attending a Karachi madrassa, Representative McCaul expressed support for GOP efforts on madrassa reform. The Ambassador added that the Embassy was aware of the case and is working on the children's repatriation.

¶4. (C) The Congressmen asked about madrassa reform. The President explained that Pakistani society is very diverse with divisions along sectarian, socioeconomic and other lines; as a result, his most important role as a leader is to "bring sanity in a difficult environment." He characterized his madrassa reform as a "partial success" and hoped that the current government would continue his efforts. Children should be mainstreamed into society, and given the opportunity to learn skills which will make them employable, he said. Beating back extremism

¶4. (C) Musharraf explained how the government is countering extremism, and commented that "very big positives" came out of the February 18 elections, namely the "total decimation of the extremist parties." The turnout in the areas most affected by extremism proved that Pakistanis do not want these elements in government. He commented that people had only supported extremists out of fear and that recent military operations had "called their bluff." The government must deal from a position of strength, he added. Echoing

the Prime Minister's comments to CODEL Green earlier that day (septel), Musharraf explained that the GOP has a three pronged approach to combating terrorism: military force, political dialogue, and social and economic development.

¶5. (C) Explaining Pakistan's approach to political agreements with militants, Musharraf emphasized that Pakistan will not sign unless there is a commitment to four principles: no involvement with foreigners (meaning that al-Qa'ida is no longer welcome); no cross-border attacks against coalition forces; penalties for any violations; and inclusion of an implementation mechanism. He asked for time to see the positive effects of such agreements.

Increased cooperation

¶6. (C) In response to Representative Cuellar's request for three areas where Pakistan and the U.S. can work together, the President cited:

- social and economic cooperation, including passage of the Reconstruction Opportunity Zone legislation (ROZs), greater support for development in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) beyond the U.S. five year USD 750 million commitment. Musharraf commented that he was "grateful" but that this commitment is insufficient to meet the needs in the region;

- military support to raise four new wings for the Frontier Corps to bring the corp's strength to 16 wings. The GOP has already given it tanks and artillery but more is necessary; and

- more trade and investment to create jobs and alleviate poverty. Musharraf reiterated his desire to conclude negotiations on the bilateral investment treaty and for a free trade agreement.

No joint military operations

¶7. (C) Representative McCaul asked the president about the possibility of conducting joint U.S.-Pakistan military operations inside Pakistan. Sidestepping the question, Musharraf replied that

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the Frontier Corps "takes the brunt of any attacks, and is backed up by the military." He thought that there was a "clear core list of six to seven militants" that should be eliminated. The President was receptive to increased intelligence cooperation.

Firm control over nuclear weapons

¶8. (C) Representative McCaul concluded the meeting by asking Musharraf about the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Musharraf firmly replied that he has "absolutely no concerns" regarding extremists gaining access to Pakistan's arsenal "unless the extremists win." He said emphatically that he does not see that happening.

PATTERSON